

## **STUDY OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

### **DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VIRGINIA ACTION FOR HEALTHY KIDS**

The Commission on Youth unanimously approved the following study recommendation at its September 3, 2003 meeting:

**Virginia Action for Healthy Kids, at the direction of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, is requested to report to the Commission on Youth on the most effective and cost-efficient ways to prevent greater proliferation of overweight and obesity among the youth in Virginia by November 17, 2003.**

In fulfilling this directive, the Virginia Action for Healthy Kids is presenting its draft recommendations at the November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting:

- Most Effective and Cost-Efficient Ways to Prevent Greater Proliferation of Overweight and Obesity among Virginia Youth; and
- School Nutrition Standards.

Interested persons may submit comments to the Commission by the following means:

**Email** – Please send to [coymail@leg.state.va.us](mailto:coymail@leg.state.va.us) by 5 p.m. Thursday, November 13;

**Mail and/or hand-delivered** – Please insure delivery to the Commission by 5 p.m. Thursday, November 13. Envelopes hand-delivered should be left with the Capitol Police on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, General Assembly Building, Fifth Floor, 9<sup>th</sup> and Broad Streets. Mail should be addressed to Commission on Youth, Suite 517B, General Assembly Building, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

**If there are questions, please contact the Commission on Youth staff at 804-371-2481 or by email by 5 p.m. Thursday, November 13.**

***Please note: for your review, the full study report is available on the Commission on Youth website under the September 3 meeting presentations.***



## **Recommendations to the Virginia Commission on Youth for the Most Effective and Cost-Efficient Ways to Prevent Greater Proliferation of Overweight and Obesity among Virginia Youth**

**November 17, 2003**

The main goal of the Virginia Action for Healthy Kids statewide coalition is to help promote nutrition and physical activity in school environments. As a result, the recommendations we are providing to the Virginia Commission on Youth are targeted toward school-based initiatives. The recommendations build upon the premise that fit and healthy children can learn better and can grow up to be healthier adults with fewer health demands on the Commonwealth.

The Virginia Commission on Youth identified several potential methods for addressing childhood obesity in Virginia. Below each method, we have identified cost-efficient recommendations to prevent greater proliferation of overweight and obesity among Virginia youth. Unless noted, each recommendation is at no additional financial cost to the state.

## Instruction on Nutrition and Health in the Classroom

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### **1. Revise the Board of Education's regulations as approved by the Board of Health for health and physical education in public school curriculum, to be in compliance with Section 22.1-207 to:**

- Require K-10 instruction in health and physical education to be delivered by a qualified, endorsed health and physical education teacher
- Require annual fitness report cards for each student, including information on abdominal and upper body strength, aerobic activity, flexibility, and height and weight and body mass index-for-age (BMI) calculations, to be sent home to parents during standard testing times (fall, spring)
- Require Standards of Learning testing for elementary, middle, and high school students by July 1, 2007
  - Quality nutrition, health, and physical education are crucial for supporting healthy behaviors and the prevention of overweight.
  - Fitness report cards would help provide valuable health information to nurses and parents that can lead to interventions, when needed, as well as decreases in long-term health consequences.

### **2. Establish a team to investigate the feasibility of implementing agricultural programs in schools, such as the USDA-funded Farm-to-School program and school gardening programs.**

- Only 2% of youth meet the serving recommendations for all five food groups.
- Children who are actively involved in growing food (farm-to-fork) are more likely to consume those foods.

## Nutritional Code of Conduct within and around Schools

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### **3. The State Board of Education adopt regulations on nutrition integrity for school campuses**

- Children should be given plentiful opportunities to choose nutritious foods.
- There will be no additional cost from adopting this recommendation.
- The Virginia Action for Healthy Kids has developed a template for nutrition integrity (see attachment) that could be used by the Department of Education to write board regulations on nutrition integrity.

## Ways for Students to Eat a Good Breakfast

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### **4. Amend Code 20-580-10 to require all schools to offer breakfast.**

- Eating breakfast is linked to higher academic achievement and lower rates of overweight.

## Physical Education Programming

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### **5. Modify the Standards of Accreditation to require a minimum of 30 minutes of daily recess during the regular school year for elementary school students, not to include physical education requirements. Recess is not to be taken away for remediation or disciplinary action.**

- Currently, the Standards of Accreditation require daily recess for elementary students with individual schools determining the length of recess. No guidance is provided to principals on length of recess.

### **6. Modify the Standards of Accreditation so that middle and high school health and physical education teachers teach no more than 750 student periods per week.**

- This guideline would apply the same student to staff ratio to physical education as core courses.
- Currently, the Standards of Accreditation allow 1000 student periods per week class load, or 50 students per class, for health, physical education, and music classes; other disciplines teach no more than 750 student periods per week or 30 students per class.
- Additional costs will be required to hire additional staff.

**7. Establish minimum physical education requirements for every student in grades K-8, including students with disabling conditions and those in alternative education programs with the requirement being phased in until 2014.**

- The same standards should be applied to physical education as the core courses.
- The National Association of State Boards of Education recommends that elementary students have 150 minutes of physical education per week and middle and high school students participate in 225 minutes of physical education per week.
- The recommendation would be phased in over time. Most importantly, the long-term health benefits (and lower economic costs to society) would outweigh the costs of implementing this.

**8. Modify the Standards of Accreditation to require health and physical education instruction in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.**

- The Standards of Accreditation designate physical education as an elective course in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**9. Provide incentive funding to encourage schools to seek community partnerships to enhance opportunities for daily physical activities outside of the regular school day. Programs could be offered on the school campus or utilize community recreational facilities and could encourage parental participation.**

- These programs could provide opportunities for students, not involved with the school's team sports programs, to participate in non-competitive, supervised, after-school activities.
- Incentive funds could be used for staff salaries, coaches, costs to transport students to community facilities, and other related items.
- Annual costs would range from \$3.6 million to \$9 million, depending on if Title 1 or all public schools.

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### Other Systemic Changes

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**10. Require schools to provide at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, once seated, and schedule lunch periods at reasonable hours around midday (11:00 – 1:00).**

- Offering enough time to eat and offering lunch at reasonable times reduce the propensity to choose and purchase foods of minimal nutritional value outside of the school lunch.

**11. Require that every newly built elementary school have gyms and have ample safe space for outdoor recess and recreation.**

- The availability of sports facilities and play areas encourages quality physical activity.

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### Additional Recommendations

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**12. Establish a surveillance and research team to ensure a comprehensive, continuous, and reliable method for monitoring body mass index (BMI), weight-related chronic diseases, and nutrition and physical activity behaviors in children and youth, and make aggregate data available to state and local governments, public health agencies, the media and other interested citizens.**

- Virginia lacks statewide data on the prevalence of overweight and obesity among youth.
- In order to fully understand and monitor the extent and impact of the problem, the effectiveness of implementation strategies, and to monitor school policies and practices, the state needs a clearinghouse of information.
- These data would increase the opportunities to acquire external funds to address childhood obesity.

# Virginia Action for Healthy Kids Recommendations for School Nutrition Standards



## Background Information

Childhood overweight and obesity rates have nearly tripled in the past thirty years and continue to rise. Poor eating habits and increased sedentary activities have contributed to this trend. There are numerous emotional and health consequences of overweight. Since the greatest portion of a child's day is spent in the school environment, schools are in a strong position to impact children's nutritional and physical activity habits and reduce the proliferation of childhood obesity. Nutrition and physical activity are essential for students to achieve their full academic and physical potential. The goal of these standards is to provide a framework for schools to make positive changes that would increase the availability of nutritious foods.

While the Federal government has established nutrition standards for school breakfast and lunch meals served under the national School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), the greatest challenge to promoting healthy food choices in schools is that other foods and beverages are sold in competition with school meals. Competitive foods include foods from vending machines, school stores, snack bars, fundraisers, and others. Currently there are no statewide standards in place for competitive foods in Virginia.

In general, competitive foods are high in fat, added sugar, and calories, and low in important nutrients. (Examples include candy bars, chips, and sodas.) Over the past few decades, there has been an increase in the availability of these foods in the school setting. When children replace school meals with these less nutritious foods, they are at risk for inadequate nutrient intake and excess calorie intake. When these foods are purchased in addition to school meals, there is the risk of over-consumption that may contribute to overweight and obesity.

Schools play a crucial role in promoting and supporting children as they develop healthy eating habits. Virginia Action for Healthy Kids (VAFHK) recommends that all schools adopt nutrition integrity guidelines to help facilitate schools' ability provide students with nutritious options, based on the following precepts:

- A healthy, well-nourished student is ready to learn and will stay in school.
- Children should be given plentiful opportunities to choose nutritious foods.
- Schools should provide quality nutrition education in addition to healthful foods, so students not only have access to healthy options, but also gain the knowledge, skills, and motivation to make nutritious food choices.
- High calorie, low nutrient items should be limited by access and/or portion size, since they contribute to excessive calories and possibly overweight. A variety of nutritious, appealing, and culturally appropriate foods and beverages should be available to all students.

- Schools should be encouraged to participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs and actively promote student participation, since these programs are mandated to provide well-balanced nutritious meals for all students, based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

# Virginia Action for Healthy Kids

## Recommendations for School Nutrition Standards



These nutrition recommendations are provided as a guide or template for schools to use when developing local nutrition policies. They are based, in part, upon the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2000* and the *U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action*, and were developed by the Virginia Action for Healthy Kids, a coalition of educators, health professionals, and community members aimed at promoting health and academic achievement among Virginian youth. For more information, visit: [www.ext.vt.edu/actionforhealthykids](http://www.ext.vt.edu/actionforhealthykids) or contact Dr. Serrano at [serrano@vt.edu](mailto:serrano@vt.edu)

**Definitions:** The following general definitions apply to all recommendations

School Day – from 6:00 am until the end of the last instructional period

Campus – school building and grounds

Competitive Foods - Foods and beverages offered in competition with the school meal programs

	Recommendation		Rationale	
<b>General Recommendations</b>	1) Require all foods and beverages offered anywhere on the school campus to incorporate the recommendations of VAFHK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school environment should support and teach healthy eating and learning in order to provide students the skills to build and maintain a healthy lifestyle.</li> </ul>	
	2) Prohibit competitive foods of minimal nutritional value on campus during the school day			
	3) Encourage fund-raising organizations to limit sale of high fat or high calorie foods of minimal nutritional value		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breakfast provides students with needed nutrients. Participation in school breakfast has been demonstrated to improve test scores, composite math and reading percentile scores, class participation, and reduce absences.</li> </ul>	
	4) Establish a school breakfast program if the school does not have one			
	5) Establish a Nutrition Advisory Council in schools consisting of administrators, teachers, school nutrition personnel, students, parents and community partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutrition Advisory Councils provide opportunities for parental and community involvement in nutrition-related activities at schools</li> </ul>	
	Recommendation		Rationale	Suggestions
	Beverages that contain at		Fruit contains important	Fruit juices with

<b>Beverages</b>	<u>least</u> 25% fruit juice with no added sweeteners	nutrients and is linked to disease prevention	25% minimum fruit juice. Optimum would be 100% real fruit juices
	Water	Water is an essential nutrient and a healthy beverage choice	Bottled water without added sugar, artificial sweeteners or caffeine
	Low-fat (1%), non-fat milk	Milk is a good source of calcium, which is important for long-term bone health. Offering low or non-fat milk promotes calcium consumption without contributing unnecessary calories and fat	Low-fat (1%) and non-fat milk and flavored milks
	<b>Eliminate sale of:</b>		
	Soft drinks, sport drinks, punch, and other juice drinks containing less than 25% real fruit juice	These drinks provide little nutritional value, replace more healthful alternatives, and promote tooth decay	
	Beverages that contain caffeine (except chocolate milk*)  *chocolate milk is a good source of calcium	Caffeine is considered an addictive substance	
	Carbonated beverages (including flavored and unflavored sparkling waters)	Research indicates carbonated beverage consumption directly impacts and replaces more healthful alternatives in the diet. Carbonated beverages cannot be sold as part of USDA guidelines	



Snacks, Sweets, Side Dishes	Recommendation	Rationale	Suggestions
	<u>Portion Size</u> Less than 300 kcal (calories) per item	Larger serving sizes may lead to over-consumption	See chart on page 5.
	<u>Fat</u> No more than 30% of total calories from fat, except nuts and seeds.**  ** Although high in fat and calories, nuts and seeds are high in monounsaturated fat, which can help lower "bad" LDL cholesterol and maintain "good" HDL cholesterol	High fat foods contribute to the intake of unnecessary calories without added nutrients	Pretzels, baked potato and corn chips, some popcorns, some granola bars, yogurt (preferably low- fat or non-fat), low-fat string cheese, nuts and seeds**
	<u>Saturated Fat</u> No more than 10% of calories from saturated fat	Foods that are high in saturated fat increase the risk of coronary heart disease by raising blood cholesterol	See suggestions above under "fat"
	<u>Sodium</u> Use in moderation	The <i>Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2000</i> urges moderation in sodium intake	Low-sodium snacks
	<u>Sugar</u> No more than 35% by weight+  +except fresh, dried or canned fruits and vegetables, without additional sweeteners	Foods and beverages that are high in sugar are often high in calories and low in nutrients.+ They also promote dental caries	Some granola bars, trail mix, animal crackers, graham crackers, frozen fruit bars, frozen yogurts, light ice creams, light puddings and gelatins
Whole Grains, Fruits and Vegetables	Recommendation	Rationale	Suggestions
	<u>Whole Grains</u> Encourage the use of whole grain breads and cereals	A diet with adequate fiber helps prevent colorectal cancers, aids in good digestion, and may reduce cholesterol	Whole grain breads and whole-grain snacks

	<u>Fruits and Vegetables</u> Require the availability of high-quality fruits and vegetables on the school campus	Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber, and low in calories. Adequate fruit and vegetable intake among youth is a problem, with access being one of the top barriers	All fruits and vegetables: fresh, cooked, dried and canned without additional sweeteners
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## Suggested Portion Sizes<sup>1</sup>

<b>Snacks and Sweets</b> chips, crackers, popcorn, cereal trail mix, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, jerky	<b>1.25 oz</b>
<b>Cookies / cereal bars</b>	<b>2 oz</b>
<b>Bakery items</b> (e.g., pastries, muffins)	<b>3 oz</b>
<b>Frozen desserts, ice cream</b>	<b>3 oz</b>
<b>Yogurt</b>	<b>8 oz</b>
<b>Beverages</b> (no limit on water or milk)	<b>12 oz</b>

<sup>1</sup>Calories should be 300 kcal (calories) or less per item